ITALIAN *Romantics*

BRILLIANT CLASSICS

# FRANCESCO CILEA

## COLLECTION

Songs
Chamber Music
Concertante Suites
Complete Piano Music

# Francesco Cilea Collection

**CONCERTANTE SUITES**

**Francesco Cilea** 1866-1950
**Suite in E** *for violin & orchestra*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I. | Andante Appassionato | 3'39 |
| 2. | II. | Tempo di Minuetto (Allegretto) | 1'40 |
| 3. | III. | Andante Sostenuto | 3'58 |
| 4. | IV. | Allegro | 2'48 |

**Raffaele Cacciola** b.1965

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| 5. | | **Il Canto Dell'Amore** *for soloists and string orchestra* (arr. Cacciola) | 4'12 |

**Leonardo Leo** 1694-1744
**Concerto in D**
*for cello & string orchestra*
(arr. Francesco Cilea)

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|---|---|---|---|
| 6. | I. | Andante Sostenuto e Grazioso | 4'06 |
| 7. | II. | Larghetto | 3'57 |
| 8. | III. | Allegro con Bravura | 2'41 |

**Francesco Cilea**
**Piccola Suite** *for cello & orchestra*

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| 9. | | Introduzione alla Danza | 1'58 |
| 10. | I. | Danza Moderato | 4'30 |
| 11. | II. | Notturnino Andante Sostenuto | 5'20 |
| 12. | III. | Alla Marcia Allegro Giusto | 5'35 |

Enrico Bronzi *cello*
Massimo Quarta *violin*

**I Virtuosi Del Teatro Alla Scala**
Filippo Arlia *conductor*

Recording: 11-13 September 2022,
Auditorium Europa, Bernareggio (MB), Italy
Sound Engineer and Artistic Director: Raffaele Cacciola
Technical Assistant: Francesco Valastro
Editing and Mastering: BartokStudio
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**CHAMBER MUSIC**
**Cello Sonata in D**

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|---|---|---|---|
| 13. | I. | Allegro moderato | 6'10 |
| 14. | II. | Alla Romanza: Largo doloroso | 5'26 |
| 15. | III. | Allegro animato | 5'29 |

**Piano Trio in D**

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|---|---|---|---|
| 16. | I. | Allegro sostenuto | 6'10 |
| 17. | II. | Scherzo: Presto | 2'13 |
| 18. | III. | Andante molto espressivo | 4'56 |
| 19. | IV. | Allegro con fuoco | 5'42 |

**Canto** for violin and piano
(No.2 in D minor from *Vocalizzo da concerto*)

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| 20. | | Lento doloroso | 5'15 |

**Theme and Variations**
*for violin and piano*

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| 21. | | Andante sostenuto – Poco più mosso – Allegro – Andante – Moderato | 5'56 |

Ilaria Cusano *violin*
Jacopo Di Tonno *cello*
Domenico Codispoti *piano*

Recording: February 2013, Studio I Musicanti, Rome
Producer & sound engineer: Giovanni Caruso
Musical supervision: Dario Paolini & Giovanni Caruso
Editing: Andrea Caruso & Giovanni Caruso
Domenico Codispoti plays on a Yamaha CF III SA Concert Grand Piano,
prepared by Valerio Sabatini and supplied by Studio 12 Pianoforti, Rome
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**COMPLETE PIANO MUSIC**
**Tre piccoli pezzi** (1888)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 22. | | Melodia | 1'53 |
| 23. | | Serenata | 2'23 |
| 24. | | Danza | 2'17 |
| 25. | | **Chanson du rouet (L'arcolaio) Op.4** | 2'39 |
| 26. | | **Canto del mattino (Romanza) Op.5** | 3'12 |
| 27. | | **La petite coquette – Air de danse Op.9** | 2'43 |
| 28. | | **C'est toi que j'aime – Impromptu à la Mazurka Op.10** | 2'48 |
| 29. | | **Aria campestre** | 1'28 |
| 30. | | **Flatterie (Adulazione) Op.11** | 2'24 |
| 31. | | **Mazurka Op.14** | 2'39 |
| 32. | | **Badinage (Burlesca) Op.15** | 2'12 |
| 33. | | **Berceuse Op.20** | 2'08 |
| 34. | | **Notturno Op.22** | 3'36 |
| 35. | | **Seconda Danza Op.26** | 1'37 |

**Trois petits morceaux Op.28**

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| 36. | | Loin dans la mer | 2'40 |
| 37. | | Feuille d'album | 2'18 |
| 38. | | Pensée espagnole | 1'41 |

**Tre pezzi Op.29**

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| 39. | | Romanza | 3'09 |
| 40. | | Scherzino | 2'32 |
| 41. | | Barzelletta | 2'49 |

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| 42. | **Gocce di rugiada Op.33** | 2’49 |
| 43. | **Au village Op.34** | 1’47 |
| 44. | **A la Mazurke Op.35** | 1’23 |
| 45. | **Valzer Op.36** | 1’47 |
| 46. | **Foglio d’album Op.41** | 2’02 |
| | **Suite (Vecchio stile) Op.42** | |
| 47. | Allegro | 2’03 |
| 48. | Sarabanda | 3’38 |
| 49. | Capriccio | 3’24 |
| 50. | **Foglio d’album** (1944, reworking of Op.41) | 1’58 |
| 51. | **Fuga reale** (unpublished) | 2’11 |
| | **Tre pezzi Op.43** | |
| 52. | Verrà? | 3’00 |
| 53. | Acque correnti | 2’07 |
| 54. | Valle fiorita | 3’59 |
| | **Due pezzi** | |
| 55. | Risonanze nostalgiche | 8’08 |
| 56. | Festa silana | 3’54 |
| 57. | **Scherzo** (1883) | 4’10 |
| 58. | **Scherzando** (1883) | 3’47 |
| 59. | **Danza calabrese** (1884) | 3’51 |
| 60. | **Impromptu** (1885) | 3’18 |
| 61. | **Mazurka** (1886) | 1’31 |
| 62. | **Preludio** (1886) | 1’33 |
| 63. | **Vespero** (Melodia, 1887) | 3’03 |
| 64. | **Foglio d’album** (1930) | 1’39 |
| | **Reworkings of previous works** | |
| 65. | Invocazione (from *Melodia for violin and piano*) | 2’37 |
| 66. | Serenata a dispetto (from *Canzonetta for violin and piano*) | 2’01 |
| 67. | Danza (from *Piccolo Suite for orchestra*) | 3’48 |
| | **Four Hands Music** | |
| 68. | *Untitled* in A (completed by Salvatore M. Tripodi) | 3’29 |
| 69. | Chansonnette Op.31 | 2’04 |
| 70. | Sentiment poétique | 2’26 |
| 71. | Amour joyeux Op.37 | 2’54 |
| | **Four hands transcriptions of previous works** | |
| 72. | Idillio (from *Suite per orchestra*, 1887) | 3’12 |
| 73. | Alla Gavotta (from *Suite per orchestra*, 1887) | 3’38 |

Pier Paolo Vincenzi *piano*
Marco Gaggini *piano* (tr.68-73)

Recording: 17-20 April 2016, Bartokstudio, Bernareggio (MB), Italy
Sound engineer: Raffaele Cacciola
Piano: Steinway D-274
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**SONGS & PIANO MUSIC**

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|---|---|---|
| 74. | **Romanza** | 3’16 |
| 75. | **Il mio canto** | 2’29 |
| 76. | **Alba novella** | 2’39 |
| 77. | **Nel ridestarmi** | 2’22 |
| 78. | **Serenata** | 1’55 |
| 79. | **Romanza** (pianoforte solo) | 2’29 |
| 80. | **Vita breve** | 2’55 |
| 81. | **Ninna nanna popolare savoiarda** | 1’32 |
| 82. | **Maria mare** (arr. D. Boldrini) | 3’52 |
| 83. | **Statuit di Dominus** | 0’48 |
| 84. | **Badinage** (pianoforte solo) | 1’56 |
| 85. | **Au village** (pianoforte solo) | 1’38 |
| 86. | **Ave Maria** | 2’07 |
| 87. | **Pensiero spagnolo** (pianoforte solo) | 1’34 |
| 88. | **Bionda larva** | 3’22 |
| 89. | **Ave Maria da Tilda** (arr. D. Boldrini) | 3’42 |
| 90. | **Agnus Dei** | 1’55 |
| 91. | **Fuga sul tema “Io son l’umile ancella” da Adriana Lecouvreur** | 2’17 |

Lenny Lorenzani *soprano*
David Boldrini *piano*

Recording: 11-13 July 2023, Palazzo Santa Chiara, Tropea, Italy
Sound engineer and artistic director: Raffaele Cacciola
Technical assistant: Francesco Valastro
Editing and mastering: BartokStudio
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Recordings: Between 2013-2023
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**CONCERTANTE SUITES**

**Francesco Cilea** (Palmi, 1866 – Varazze, 1950) is largely known to audiences for his operas, especially *L'Arlesiana* (1897, rev. 1898) and *Adriana Lecouvreur* (1902). His earlier compositions, including *Gina* (1889) and *La Tilda* (1892), have practically disappeared from the opera repertoire, while *Gloria*, composed in 1907 and revised in 1932, has only been staged very rarely. With the exception of Giacomo Puccini, such has been the fate of many composers belonging to the Giovane Scuola, or ' young school' that flourished in Italy between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At best, they are recalled for one or two works, although until the 1940s their works were performed in theaters around the world. Although there are probably various reasons for this neglect, an outstanding factor was unquestionably the impact and influence of changes in musical language during the early 1900s, especially when the historical avant-garde composers appeared on the scene. Firmly rooted in the tonal tradition, the composers of the Giovane Scuola were well versed in counterpoint and harmony, but generally floored by the new music. In all likelihood this is why Cilea abandoned opera composition after *Gloria* and from 1913 concentrated on teaching, as did many of his contemporaries. In 1916 he was appointed director of the S. Pietro a Majella Conservatoire in Naples, a position previously occupied by Giuseppe Martucci, who had paved the way for renewed interest in instrumental music, the fruits of which have only recently drawn the attention of musical historiography. The works that feature in this recording speak eloquently for those fruitful years. Apart from the acclaimed melodic vein, the *Suite for Violin* and the *Piccola Suite for Orchestra* reveal the composer's attention to counterpoint and scoring as well as an approach to tonal harmony that reflects his awareness of innovation, especially among French composers of the period. His handling of musical form also denotes his adherence to the great tradition in composition of the Neapolitan school, with the Suite acting as a way of transcending the forms typical of Romanticism, especially the sonata form. The scoring of the *Concerto in D major* by Leonardo Leo, one of the founders of the School, is another case in point. More specifically, the *Suite for Violin and Orchestra in E major* (1946), which is an orchestral arrangement of the earlier Suite for Violin and Piano (1937), also speaks for tradition, but more as regards form than content. The first movement is an *Andante appassionato* in ternary form in which the customary melodic vein is underpinned by shimmering harmonies, and the colourful E major of the first and last sections contrasts with the C major of the central section. In the second movement, *Tempo di Minuetto* (*Andantino*), all that remains of the original dance form is the meter. The outcome is like a small, brightly coloured picture in which the clarity and lightness of the scoring underpins the joyful brilliance of the violin part to create an effect that is almost reminiscent of the 18th century. The mood of the *Andante sostenuto* of the third movement is totally different. It opens in C sharp minor, using the pedal note to support the descending arpeggios of the soloist and conveying the listener along a path featuring minor keys only occasionally brightened by more luminous moments, before concluding with the unusual final cadenza, here and there embellished with sounds from the harp. The fourth movement, *Allegro con vivacità*, returns to the confident virtuosic atmosphere of the second movement. By constructing the last movement like a sort of conclusive Rondo, Cilea shows how certain typically 20th century techniques, such as the use of groups of descending chords, was not just a dutiful way of honouring a past he certainly loved and respected, but had become an integral part of his approach to composition. Although the *Piccola Suite* for orchestra (1931) is earlier than the *Suite for Violin and Orchestra*, it reveals even greater use of "advanced" compositional forms, largely derived from French music of the period: modalities, whole tone scales, long sequences of seventh and ninth chords...

The *Introduzione* may initially seem more traditional, but this is misleading. It develops from a pensive D sharp minor key to a cheerful E major, and by the second movement, *Danza*, numerous new elements are evident: intense use of the woodwind, especially the flute, supported by slightly dissonant chords that suggest something slightly mysterious, followed by a somewhat French, whole-tone scale response in the trumpets. Although Cilea never entirely abandons tonality, he wavers away from it and then returns to it, thereby creating a series of expectations that are only resolved in the conclusion. The next movement *Notturnino*, opens with a tranquil melody in the oboe above a gentle, muted accompaniment in the strings. As the melody is taken over by the strings and then returns to the woodwind, cor anglais and clarinet, what comes clearly to the fore is the close relationship between this work and compositions such as Claude Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, especially in the continuous use of long sequences of dominant chords that resolve into each other, creating a shimmering, melodic sensation of continuous flux. In the last movement, *Marcia*, a distinctly dance-like, energetic initial theme alternates with a serene and lyrical second motif before majestically returning to the first subject that constitutes the brilliant, intense finale.

The arrangement, revision and scoring of the *Concerto in D major for cello* by Leonardo Leo (original version 1737) bears witness to Cilea's deep connection with the Conservatoire where he had studied and where he was later employed, before being appointed director, a position he maintained through to retirement in 1935. Together with Durante, Leo was one of the founders of the great Neapolitan school of composition that based its teaching technique on the use of the 'partimento', in other words a sketch, often a bass line, written out on a single staff, whose main purpose was to act as a guide for improvisation. The Neapolitan school gained widespread recognition between the 1600s and the 1700s, continuing to be influential through to the early 20th century. Little wonder, then, that Cilea was happy to honour the tradition. Indeed, he had already written a piano arrangement of the same work, published by Ricordi in 1922, before setting out on the orchestral version of 1934. This second transcription involved changes in both form and scoring, which was only sketched in for the original manuscript, where the second violin part is often missing. There is no scoring for the violas either, since Cilea only added them later, transforming what had been conceived as a three-part work into one arranged in four parts. He also added a complex cadenza in the first movement and a short one in the third. Yet the most substantial changes regard the form of the composition. The five movements of the original work were *Andantino grazioso, Con bravura, Larghetto con poco moto* and *Fuga, allegro di molto*. Cilea moved the third movement (*Larghetto*) to second position, so that the third became the *Allegro con bravura*, while the other two were eliminated.

Lastly, there is the touching homage of a modern composer, Raffaele Cacciola, to Cilea, his fellow countryman. In the first section of *Il Canto dell'Amore* the melody is entrusted to the oboe in a solo part that is followed by counterpoint in the cello and double bass. Following this 'chamber' rendering, the same melody is then taken up by the whole orchestra, and thereafter reiterated by the clarinet, flute and oboe in the conclusion. Harmony and counterpoint owe much to Cilea's example, with extensive tonalities that are sometimes hard to recognize, followed by returns to what seems more familiar (as in the *Piccola Suite*) and the pursuit of pure, simple melody, devoid of counterpoint or harmony. A homage to the unforgettable melodist to whom this recording is dedicated.

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*Translation: Kate Singleton*

**CHAMBER MUSIC**

Born in Palmi in 1866, at the tender age of seven Cilea was sent to Naples to study law. He found the idea of becoming a musician far more attractive, however, and against his parents' wish he enrolled at the Conservatorio 'S.P. Majella' in Naples to study the piano, harmony and counterpoint.

He obtained his diploma in 1889, and was immediately appointed Professor of Harmony and Piano, which did not stop him from devoting due time to composition and opera. His musical career was extremely successful, his output including important works such as the symphonic poem *Il canto della vita*, written in 1913 for the centenary celebrations of Giuseppe Verdi's birth. In 1938 he was awarded the title of Accademico d'Italia, in recognition of his musical achievements.

Today Cilea is remembered not only as the composer of important operas such as *Adriana Lecouvreur, L'arlesiana* and *Gina*, which are all still regularly performed in opera houses throughout the world, but also for his chamber compositions, many of them written while he was still relatively young.

The **Sonata for cello and piano** in D major Op.38 was composed in 1888. The lyricism of the first movement was to become a feature of many of Cilea's works. The gentle second movement, designated as 'doloroso', leaves the performers considerable interpretative freedom in their evocation of nocturnal atmospheres. The third movement is lively and ironic, with moments that are typical of the French music idiom, especially that of Ravel and Debussy.

The **Theme and Variations** and the **Canto** (from the *Vocalizzo da concerto* No.2 in D minor) are much later works (1931–1932), originally written with an orchestral accompaniment and later transcribed by Cilea for violin and piano. They were published in Milan by Casa Ricordi.

In 1886 Cilea composed the **Trio for violin, cello and piano**, a more complete, organic composition than the Sonata and the Theme and Variations. Here, again, the music is distinctly lyrical, with passages that are full of poetry and nostalgia, and other moments in which an energetic, martial atmosphere prevails.

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*Translation: Kate Singleton*

**COMPLETE PIANO MUSIC**

Cilea's works for the piano are largely unknown to the wider public. With the exception of a few compositions mostly used for teaching purposes, his oeuvre for the instrument rarely features in concert programs, or indeed in the catalogues of music publishers. The first challenge to be addressed in this recording project was thus to identify, list and date the relevant works, a task that was greatly facilitated by the help of Salvatore Massimo Tripodi, to whom we would like to express our heartfelt thanks. Tripodi was the first to compile a catalogue of Cilea's piano compositions, which appeared as an appendix to his study "*L'opera pianistica di Francesco Cilea*", included in the collection of essays published by Laruffa Editore in 1994. Moreover, in 2001 Tripodi also edited the revision and publication of a series of hitherto unpublished works for piano solo and piano four-hands, drawing special attention to a number of manuscript scores kept at the F. Cilea Museum in Palmi.

Thanks to Tripodi I have been able to examine certain compositions that would otherwise have been very difficult to track down: for instance, the *Trois petits morceaux Op.28* of 1895, published by Bote & Bock in Berlin in 1898. Unfortunately our combined efforts were not sufficient to allow the rediscovery of two other works: a *Serenata malinconica Op.30* for piano solo, and the *Refrain d'enfance* for piano four-hands composed in 1895. Both of these works, first published by Raffaele Izzo and later by Curci, have long been out of print and unobtainable.

Made up of works of unquestionable value, depth and creativity, the catalogue of Cilea's oeuvre for the piano covers a period stretching from the years of his musical education through to 1930, revealing that his interest in the instrument never waned. With the exception of a *Fuga reale* written as an exercise during the years he studied at the San Pietro a Majella Conservatoire in Naples (the manuscript score is still kept at the Conservatoire library), Cilea's earliest compositions for the instrument date back to the years 1883-1888, when he was still seeking a stylistic identity of his own. Clearly the composer was deeply attracted by the major works that gave voice to European romanticism. On the one hand there is the *Scherzo* of 1883, in many respects reminiscent of Schumann, as Cesare Orselli has pointed out in his perceptive biography *Francesco Cilea*, published by Zecchini editore in 2016; and on the other, pages that speak for the influence of Chopin, such as the *Mazurka* and the *Preludio*, both written in 1886. During the same years he also strove to promote and incorporate aspects of the musical traditions of his homeland. One of the fruits of this interest was a *Danza calabrese*, which in later life he totally disparaged, declaring that it should be burnt.

The short romances composed during the last decade of the 19th century tended to be more à la mode and somewhat lighter in tone. Largely published by Izzo in Naples, they bore descriptive titles such as *Chant du matin, La petite coquette, Chanson du rouet*. Although critics have occasionally been absurdly dismissive in their appraisal of these works, the scores actually speak for the composer's meticulous handling of his material and his delight in showing off certain features of timbre and harmony.

As he was shaping his stylistic identity, Cilea was not insensitive to the musical language of his contemporaries, both in Italy and elsewhere in Europe. For example, as Tripodi has pointed out, while revealing an essentially Mediterranean taste for melody, the *Notturno Op.22* not only embodies aspects reminiscent of Giuseppe Martucci, but also reflects Thalberg's approach to the piano.

Many of the pieces written during this period enjoyed considerable success thanks to the reprint published by Curci in the 1940s. Some of them, in particular, were included in a collection aimed at young piano students edited by Alessandro Longo.

Yet many other pieces of similar value have long been neglected, despite the fact that they embodied numerous innovative and original features. A telling case in point is *Badinage Op.15* (it was published with this title in the Izzo edition, whereas in the later Curci reprint it appeared as *Burlesca*), which reveals subtle use of harmonic ambiguity in both the individual episodes, and in the passage between them. Likewise remarkable are the *Trois petits morceaux* mentioned above.

A third stage in Cilea's compositions for the piano came about gradually, between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, when he started alternating more "conventional" pieces aimed at middleclass Italian audiences steeped in opera with interesting experiments in timbre (*Au village Op.34* features a witting interplay of echoes and interwoven voices that reflects his experience as a student in Naples, where counterpoint was a fundamental subject).

While *Op.41*, published by Sonzogno in 1906, bears witness to his ties to music of the 1800s (likewise the revised edition of the work published in 1944 by Suvini-Zerboni), the framework for *Op.42* was much more experimental and "European" in perspective.

Cilea's instrumental compositions of the early 1900s, and in particular his works for the

keyboard, focused on the rediscovery and manipulation of themes, languages and forms belonging to the past. With its alternation of passages reminiscent of certain Sonatas by Scarlatti (*Allegro*) and homages to early dance forms (*Sarabanda*), the *Suite Vecchio Stile* is evidently a case in point. The last movement of the triptych is the *Capriccio*, which Orselli has rightly described as a tribute to the early romantic taste for virtuoso display.

*Op.43* speaks for Cilea's complete assimilation of the innovations in harmony and timbre that burgeoned in Europe in the early 1900s, especially in the north.

In *Verrà?, Acque correnti and Valle fiorita* (the three pieces that make up the triptych based on poems by Felice Soffrè), the composer abandoned metric irregularity, harmonic audacity and hexatonic scales and arpeggios. In later works such as the diptych *Risonanze nostalgiche* and *Festa silana*, as well as the *Serenata a dispetto*, he nevertheless made more emphatic use of them, thereby establishing a profile that was not only far removed from the 19th century poetics of his early compositions, but also from the "Young School" with which he has generally been identified.

It would thus seem that posterity has erred in defining Cilea's place in the history of music. To do justice to his role as an innovator within the somewhat stultified framework of Italian music at the turn of the 19th century, he should be viewed as a forerunner of the great renaissance of the Italian instrumental tradition brought about by the "the 1880s generation".

This collection also comprises a number of transcriptions and arrangements of pieces originally written for other instruments: *Invocazione*, which is a version of the *Melodia* for violin and piano, the *Serenata a dispetto* mentioned above, also originally for violin and piano, and a *Danza in do diesis minore*, an arrangement in C sharp minor of the *Piccola Suite per Orchestra*.

*Idillio* and *Alla gavotta* are also transcriptions of orchestral pieces, this time for piano four-hands, where as the other pieces for four hands were originally conceived as piano duets.

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*Translation by Kate Singleton*

**SONGS & PIANO MUSIC**

'In Art, the expression of the spirit, the constant and uncompromising norm for me has always been Italianism, modernised in the progress of forms and technique, never stifled nor deformed, as Arlesiana, Adriana and Gloria, the three creatures of my imagination and my dreamed ideal, attest and prove'. Francesco Cilea wrote these words at the end of his 'Ricordi', in their last draft of December 1947.

Witnesses of the Italianism, of the simple, fluid and elegant vocal melodic line are, in addition to his beloved operas, the lyrical works for voice and piano that were produced over a period of more than half a century.

Lyrics, sacred pieces and vocalisations represent Cilea's entire output for voice and piano and were published in a single volume that also includes the unpublished ones, by Ricordi, in 2016 for the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth.

In November 1913, in an interview given to the Palermo daily 'L'Ora', Cilea declared: 'The true instrument of expression of the passions is the divine human voice, with which no instrument can ever rival'.

He devoted himself to the human voice in various ways throughout his life, both as Director, from 1913 to 1916, of the 'Bellini' Conservatory in Palermo and later, until 1935, of the 'San Pietro a Majella' Conservatory in Naples, and by giving lessons to Ebe Stignani and Maria Caniglia, among others, and by lavishing advice and lessons on the performers of his operas. Cilea's proximity benefited the young Enrico Caruso, the first interpreter of Federico in Arlesiana and Maurizio in Adriana Lecouvreur.

The first composition featured on this album, 'Romanza', was written at the age of seventeen by a student of Cilea in Naples, is clearly classical in style and inspired by the lyrics of Vincenzo Bellini, to whom Cilea was bound by perpetual devotion from his earliest childhood, when he was thunderstruck by the finale of 'Norma', performed by the band from Palmi, his hometown.

'Romanza' was followed by 'Bionda larva', also in chronological time of composition: Cilea, in his early twenties, was working on his first opera 'Gina', to a libretto by Enrico Golisciani, requested in Naples as the final essay in his composition course. By the same poet and from the same period is the music for this chamber aria. From a brief compositional analysis, we can observe how each harmonic choice, hence timbre, subtends a precise expressive intent, respectful of the poetic verses.

The compositional scheme is A B A1 B1, dear to most classical composers. The piece, in the key of C# minor, opens with a silent open fifth that projects the listener into an uncertain dimension of hypnotic bewilderment. The absence of the third in the chord makes it impossible to identify the mode, and the minor chords that precede the beginning of the melody resonate as a mournful ascertainment of what will be softly declaimed in the first stanza.

The dazzling grief, the loss of a distant love described by the text, is narrated by a very simple, lulling melodic line in six octaves, swinging between the tonic and the dominant throughout the A section.

According to almost madrigal tradition, in correspondence with a luminous memory described by the second stanza, Cilea, creates the B section of the romance with an enharmonic change of key: the dominant G# becomes A-flat and we are projected into the key of D-flat major, as bright and enthralling as the song that permeates it.

The melodic section shifts a fourth above and the piano writing is articulated on an internal counterpoint that follows the singing almost like a concertante cello. This is the moment of Bellini's singing, sparse and free: it is like observing a kaleidoscope showing the infinite facets of the soul. According to the classical scheme, the narrating strophe returns: the daily grief is narrated in the plant tonality of C#; episode B1 is followed by the close in the initial tonality of C# minor, on which the last melodic outburst of D flat major of episode B1 seems to inexorably fold and fade away. The open fifth, representing silence and loss, is perhaps the same one that encapsulates the whole piece, the origin and end of everything.

The chamber lyrics are fully integrated into the context of affection and esteem for certain personalities who frequented the beautiful residence of Palazzo Spinelli during his years as a director in Naples, such as one of the most famous Italian criminalists, Enrico Pessina and his son Giuseppe, a poet. On lyrics of the latter Cilea set to music the lyric 'Serenata (L'aere imbruna)', 'Non ti voglio amar?' and concealed by the pseudonym P. Joe, 'Serenata (Mormorante di tenero desio)', dedicated to his aunt Filomena. We know from the father's correspondence with the young Francesco, who was studying at the Naples Conservatory from 1878, how united the Cilea family was: many greetings from grandparents and aunts and uncles appear in the letters, for whom the father acted as spokesman. It is therefore not surprising that a lyric, an intimate, drawing-room piece, was dedicated to a member of the family.

A link with 'Arlesiana' can be found in the text of 'Alba novella', which is identical to Federico's arioso, suppressed in the final version of the work. Echoing in this composition, as in the later 'Nel ridestarmi' and 'Vita breve', are the harmonic solutions of Debussy and Ravel. In 'Nel Ridestarmi', a veritable harmonic nebula, created by the right hand's sextuplets of sixteenths, opens the piece; the rarefied melody develops on an ascending tetrachord that stands out on the seventh chords, built on the fundamental grades of the key of E flat minor without the introduction of the third chord. It seems, as in much impressionistic music, that it is the idiomatic passage that dictates the writing and instrumental resolutions.

The mezzo-soprano finds support in the counterpoint with the right-hand line, harmonised by the frequent parallel open fifths. The artifice of considering the parallel fifths as a timbric and non-harmonic sound effect is a typical example of a homage to Debussy, Fauré and Puccini. Puccini himself, who, although from the Verismo school, liked to construct a sound direction for the scenes of his works, using artifices from the impressionist school, including the open fifths in his compositions.

An occasion piece, commissioned by the fascist regime, was the inclusion of the 'Ninna nanna savoiarda' in a volume of popular songs, where the piano imitates a distant peal of bells in a peasant setting.

Those who knew the composer saw reflected in these lyrics the trait of his shy and modest personality, surrounded almost by an aura of meekness. In his 'Memories', he described himself as follows: 'In life, I may have sometimes appeared weak, but I deny that I was weak.(...) The truth is that I would like everyone to be happy and content, and that no sorrow is as alive in me as that of others. That is why I have endeavoured not to cause anyone the slightest discontent...'.

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